

ANNOTATION

Gil, P.M. and D. Munoz, eds. *That Your School Runs Well: Approach to Lasallian Educational Model*, Lasallian Studies 17. Rome, Italy: Brothers of the Christian Schools, 2013.

This collection of essays reflects the efforts of fourteen Brothers who, over a year's time, discussed the reality and meaning of Lasallian education in its infancy, throughout its history, today, and into the future (6). They consider "pedagogy" in broad terms, more akin to the word "education" in English, "taking both a global and a detailed approach as we deal with both the guiding purposes and the profound spirit of education, as well as with both the specific style and character of procedures" (5).

The book is composed of three parts. First, the beginnings: "how education was understood in the first Lasallian community" (6). From these first few chapters, Brother Pedro Maria Gil, FSC, project coordinator for the study, articulates a definition of Lasallian education in its origins. Second, four important "episodes" (132) in the years following the founding of the Institute are viewed in an attempt to understand how Brothers were responding to the original definition of Lasallian pedagogy in light of their times. The third part centers on Lasallian education today, in a world very different from the world of the first Brothers and of the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Let us "ask ourselves," Gil states, "if it is possible to live out the Lasallian inheritance [in the 21st century] or simply remember it" (240).

In the introduction to part one, Gil notes that "Modernity and the Lasallian institution were born together in a period in which all social institutions were redefined on the same pattern: organizational rationality." The organization that emerged in the Institute's infancy was marked by five significant elements: 1) the target group of Lasallian education – the children of the artisans and of the poor (Brother Bruno Alpago); 2) the role of education in social insertion, preparing for work, and religious instruction of youth (Brother Edgard Hengemüle); 3) the educational methodology utilized (Brother Léon Lauraire); 4) the critical role of the educational community (Brother Gerard Rummery); and 5) the faith dimension of the teacher in Lasallian education (Brother Diego Muñoz). In his synthesis of these five reflections, Gil highlights three essential elements of Lasallian pedagogy in its origins: its commitment to the poor; its organization into "a network or association of schools" (115) rather than a number of independent entities; and the primacy of relationships and community.

The second part explores four "episodes" (132) that exemplify the Institute's work in the establishment of Lasallian education: 1) the work of Brother Agathon, fifth Superior General, after a century of Lasallian education (Brother Francis Ricousse); 2) the rewriting of the *Conduct of Schools* in 1834, following the French Revolution, the suppression of the Institute, the restoration of the Institute in France, and the work of the Brothers in a changing social and educational milieu (Brother Alain Houry); 3) the Latin Question in the United States from 1853 to 1923 (Brother Peter Killeen); and 4) the revision of the *Conduct of Schools* and its final global publication in 1916 (Brother Léon Lauraire). The consideration of these four episodes brings the

reader to the middle of the 20th century, a time when the Modern Era is fading away and the Post-Modern Era is emerging. In his synthesis of this second part, Gil highlights several distinctions between the founding of the Institute and its establishment as an educational institution in France and, ultimately, around the world. First, the network of schools has expanded tremendously during this time and the system that we call today “Lasallian education” is no longer being created, but has been established. New times and new needs require new responses; at the same time, as the multiple revisions of the *Conduct* evidence, the Institute grows while remaining in continuity with its founding inspiration, purposes, and organization. This establishment phase carries with it a danger: that the system or structure becomes the end, rather than the needs of the persons served. The corrective to this is faith, which keeps God at the center rather than the organization. As the Brothers remained focused on God and on God’s call to the educational service of those on the margins of society, they were free to involve themselves in a number of innovative educational ventures in the 19th century.

The third part brings the reader to Lasallian education from the 1960’s up to the present moment and into the future. The age of Modernity, in which the Institute was founded, established and matured, has morphed into Post-Modernity, which raises a question: has the Lasallian heritage become an historical artifact, or is it alive in new and creative ways while still remaining connected with and faithful to its founding? Brother Clede Casagrande suggests that “association, the experience of an educational community, continued formation and the living witness of Lasallians can all be signs that Lasallian pedagogy is in dialogue with today’s world, and is at the same time a sign of transcendence and a catalyst for social transformation” (265). Brother Robert Berger draws the reader’s attention to the importance of loyalty and faithfulness in the contemporary viability of Lasallian education. Brother Pierre Ouattara points to salvation, both in this life and in the next, as the guiding element of Lasallian education today – a salvation which requires us to leave “self-sufficiency” (298) behind. Brother Patricio Bolton contends that the same “double discernment” that guided the first Brothers must guide Lasallians today: personal and communal reflection on “the reality of the poor and the will of God in history” (305). In his synthesis of the third part, Gil suggests that a contemporary reading of the *Declaration* can help us make sense of the reality and the challenges of Lasallian education today. Brother Fabio Coronado offers his insights into the relationship between the Declaration and today’s education and today’s needs. The challenge that faced Brothers throughout history of responding creatively and faithfully to the Founding Story is the same challenge faced by all Lasallians today. It is the continuation of the invitation of Vatican II and the 39th General Chapter to “put the Lasallian Founding Charism in dialogue with the signs of the times” (352) and, as a result of the dialogue, to envision and bring to life new and renewed educational initiatives at the service of all, especially those most in need. While the responses may be new, the motivation will remain the same: the commitment of the Lasallian community to respond faithfully to God’s call to provide “a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor” – thus maintaining the commitments begun in the 17th century and established and institutionalized in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries.

This collection of essays makes a significant contribution to contemporary research that attempts to understand Lasallian education today in light of its founding and unfolding over time. Lasallians continue to discern ways to respond creatively and faithfully to the Founding Story, attempting to avoid getting stuck in “the way we have always done things” or interpreting the

Founding Story too literally. It is hoped that Lasallian Studies 17, *That Your School Runs Well*, will inspire ongoing research in critical areas including new forms of poverty and marginalization, contemporary educational methods to address these challenges most effectively, a contemporary articulation of our Lasallian story and vision, and how these all work together for the good of all, especially those most in need.